

# Read

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

Psalm 54:3-4, 5, 6-8

James 3:16-4:3

Mark 9:30-37

## LIVING THE WORD

### Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 19, 2021



#### REFLECTION

The pain of the sexual abuse and cover-up crisis in the Catholic Church looms large as we pray with Jesus' words in today's Gospel. Gentle Jesus tenderly wraps his arms around a neighborhood kid and shares that to receive a child is to receive God's very self. The littlest and the least bear the divine light. Jesus models how everyone, but especially the vulnerable, should be treated: with loving care and utmost respect.

Sadly, not everyone listens to Christ's call, even those ordained in his image. For far too long, some priests have exploited children and other vulnerable adults. These men did not heed Jesus' call to receive the young with reverence. Instead, they abused them. To make matters worse, others entrusted as church leaders covered up the sins of their brothers.

Those who have experienced trauma know that the road to healing is the journey of a lifetime. Jesus knows the journey well. Our God suffered and died at the hands of men, a painful reality he names in today's Gospel. Jesus will never forget the little ones. Jesus will always accompany the vulnerable and hurting. As the People of God, we are commissioned to do the same.



#### ACTION

Do you know a friend or classmate who has suffered some kind of abuse? It is such a painful situation that many may not talk about it. But we can take subtle action to create safe space for those who have been hurt. For instance, eliminate violent language from your vocabulary. Cut out any jokes that (unintentionally) mock those in pain. If you notice someone who is more reserved than usual, ask gently if they would like to talk.



**"Healing Begins"**

— Tenth Avenue North

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q20XRSKIBIQ>



#### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How has the abuse crisis impacted you and your community?
- ❖ Who are the children in your life? How can you receive them with care and respect?



September 19, 2021

## TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### LECTIONARY #134B

Wisdom 2:12, 17–20

Psalm 54:3–4, 5, 6–8

James 3:16–4:3

Mark 9:30–37

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

This week's Gospel reminds us that Jesus' idea of being the first (or being the best) is maybe not the same as our definition of it. Jesus instructs his disciples that if anyone wants to be the greatest or first of all, that person should be the servant to all others. In this way, Jesus demonstrates that when it comes to our faith, we should not act out of self-interest. This is not the only reading in which Jesus cautions his disciples against seeking glory or recognition. Still, we do recognize and lift up members of our faith, most specifically our saints. Today's reflection will focus on the fact that saints are not recognized for being famously skilled, but rather for their dedication in serving God and God's people.

**Q FOCUS:** *Serve God by putting others first.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

On September 21 we celebrate the Feast of St. Matthew, the evangelist and one of the twelve apostles. We hear of St. Matthew's call as an apostle in Matthew 9:9–13. Matthew was a tax collector who gave up his work to follow Christ. He became one of the four evangelists (Gospel writers) and we read from his account of the Gospel at Mass during the liturgical year A. (The readings at mass are chosen according to a three year cycle, years A, B, and C—we are currently in year B, so we would have read from Matthew's Gospel last year.)

### Church Teaching Connection

"The Saints of all times . . . are not simply symbols, distant, unreachable human beings. On the contrary, they are people who lived with their feet on the ground; they experienced the daily toil of existence with its successes and failures, finding in the Lord the strength to rise again and again, and to continue on their journey. From this we can understand that holiness is a goal that cannot be achieved only through one's own strengths, but rather it is the fruit of God's grace and of our free response to it. Therefore, holiness is a *gift* and a *calling*" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, November 1, 2019).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Mark 9:30–37

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him.

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." Taking a child, he placed it in the their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

The first shall be last. How often have you been told that you need to try to be the best at something? Today's reading reminds us that God does not measure success in the same way that we do. Jesus scolds his disciples for arguing among themselves about which of them is the most important. This desire to self-promote, to be considered "the best" is not a modern phenomenon. But we certainly do encounter that mindset in our culture today. Young people in particular are taught to try and be as competitive at everything as they can. From academics to sports to popularity, you are often encouraged to aim for superlatives—to be better, or even the best. But Jesus, and our Catholic faith, look at things a little differently.

► In what areas of your life do you strive to be the best? Sports? Classes? Music? Art?

► What is the difference between trying to be the best and trying to do your best? Why do you think it is important to make that distinction?

If you think about it, every profession, every activity has its heroes, its superstars. The Catholic faith has our superstars, too. We call them saints. Many of our saints are patrons of one thing or another. St. Anthony is the patron saint of lost items, and St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music. But we don't name someone as a patron saint based on their talents. St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music not because she was the best musician in all of history but because she was a saint who happened to love music. Put another way, she was not necessarily great at being a musician, but great at being a human and disciple of Christ. Also, it is likely that none of our saints ever had the ambition of becoming a saint. For them, the goal was not to be recognized or glorified, but simply to live out their calling of discipleship as best as they could.

► Who are the people who are models of faith in your life? Do they strive to be the best (in competition with others) or do they strive to try their best to follow Christ in all their actions?

Jesus asks us to put God, and our neighbors, first before all else. This is the challenge of discipleship. We should still find room in our lives for the activities that give us joy. But we should always strive to live out our baptismal identity as children of God as the first priority.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 30.*

**Jesus' disciples do not seem to understand when he speaks about his passion and death (this occurs frequently in the Gospels).**

**Jesus' view of the world is in opposition to what society normally promotes.**

**Just as we are called to see Christ in the poor and marginalized, Jesus reminds us today that he is also present in the lives of children. Therefore, we are called to care for them and protect them from harm.**

# Act on the Word

## Joining the Communion of Saints

*For this activity, you will need pens and either journals or paper.*

In today's reflection, we considered the saints and how they model Jesus' teaching of putting the needs of others first. This activity will help the young people consider how they are already following Jesus' teaching and how they can continue to live in this way.

The first part of this activity will be personal reflection. Give the teens journals or paper and pens and then have them spend several minutes reflecting on and writing about the following prompts.

- ✧ Image that, after your life is over, someone decides that you should be considered for recognition as a saint (just go with it). In order for the you to be recognized as a saint, Church officials must study your life, and people must speak on your behalf. What do you think they would say about you? What do you want that story to be like?
- ✧ Next, after you have thought about what you would want your story to be like, think about your life right now. Are you on track for that story? What would you have to change in order to make that a reality? Write down the one thing that you think is most accurate from your life right now to your "saint life." Then, write down one thing is least accurate.

- ✧ Finally, if you were going to be made a saint, what do you think you would be patron saint of? What is something that people would think is synonymous with your name?

Once they have finished these reflections, invite the young people to share their thoughts in small groups or ask for a few volunteers to share their responses with the whole group.

## Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus,  
you humbled yourself to the point of  
being obedient,  
even to death on a cross.  
Remove from us all our trivial manifestations  
of self-importance,  
and strengthen us to be your true servants.  
You live and reign with God the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*